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# THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT



### LIVING CONDITIONS IN HOSPITALS FOR SPECIAL DUTY NURSES

THE letter from X. Y. Z. found in the letter department of this issue opens a question for discussion which will interest equally the superintendents of training schools and the nurses doing special duty in hospitals. The picture drawn in this letter is not over-done, as it applies to some hospitals we have known about, but we know, also, a few where the women in charge of the schools have taken advantage of the opportunity afforded by the erection of new buildings to provide very complete quarters for outside specials. We have seen one hospital where there was ample dressing room space, with a separate locker for each nurse, and where a special dining room was provided, small, but quiet, with good meals attractively served.

It would be interesting if we could know through the pages of the JOURNAL what provision for specials the hospitals of the country are providing. Twelve-hour duty for such nurses is rapidly becoming an established custom in hospitals of good repute, and no good institution permits nurses to undress in the patient's room and get what sleep they can by lying on a cot in a wrapper. But of course there are great numbers of small, poor, or commercial institutions where such conditions as these still exist.

While such intelligent criticisms as the one in hand do not come to us often, complaints from hospitals of the trials of having to call in graduate specials to eke out service are not unusual. Too often such nurses disregard rules and regulations and, although taking splendid care of their patients, are a disturbing element in the school and this is

the reason why many excellent nurses are not called in for special duty in their own hospitals. "She is a good nurse, but she would not do for this case," is not an unusual answer when only one name remains on a directory list.

In nursing almost more than in anything else, the personal element enters largely into the matter of success, and this is true in every department of the work. No amount of training will counteract serious faults due to early home neglect or to the lack of education. One thing that state registration is aiming to do is to fix standards for training schools that shall help to eliminate the personally unfit, and though no rules and regulations from the outside can accomplish this without the co-operation of the heads of the schools, it serves as one more check upon the hospitals that think only of getting their work done cheaply when they consider applicants, and graduate types of women whom they are not willing to call back into their schools when once they are outside.

#### CARE OF MALE PATIENTS IN HOTELS

ANOTHER subject which needs discussion and airing at alumnae and state meetings, as well as in this magazine, is the question of the accommodation provided for nurses while caring for men in hotels. It has always seemed to us degrading for a nurse to care for a man who is alone in a hotel where a separate room is not provided for her accommodation. She certainly loses the respect of the hotel employees when she consents to live in the room with her patient, with only such privacy for dressing, bathing, etc., as can be secured by a screen, a closet or an adjoining bath-room, and with her only sleeping place a cot in the room. Such patients should properly be removed to a hospital, and alcoholic cases should be in charge of a male nurse.

While in the earlier days nurses accepted such conditions as were presented to them, feeling that they must, we have come to realize that it is a rare exception when they need be tolerated and that through concerted action, and the wiser guidance which may come through a properly-conducted central registry, they need not be. There are cases where a man overcome by illness cannot be moved and must be cared for in a hotel, but a nurse has a right to insist that an adjoining room shall be provided for her use.

#### MALICIOUS CRITICISM

IN our last issue we referred to a comment which had appeared in *The Hospital*, an English publication, reviewing the third and fourth volumes of "A History of Nursing" in a spirit of ridicule. As Miss

Nutting's name was mentioned in this criticism, she has sent the following letter to the editor of that publication, which we give in full and the sentiment of which we endorse:

“TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK CITY,  
“ May 7, 1913.

“TO THE EDITOR OF *The Hospital*,  
29 Southampton Street, Strand,  
London, England.

“DEAR SIR:

“My attention has been called to a review of the ‘History of Nursing,’ Volume III and IV, published in your issue of March 8. This review appears to me to be not only markedly unfair and misleading, but to have been written in a deeply hostile spirit and solely for the purpose of discrediting the ‘History.’ I therefore deem it my duty to try to correct as far as I am able some at least of the mistaken impressions which the review might leave in the minds of your readers.

“Your reviewer intimates that the history has been written by a ‘small clique’ . . . who have collaborated in ‘mutual laudation,’ and in ‘depreciation of all opponents.’ He calls it a ‘farrago of prejudice masquerading as history,’ and adds the grave accusation that its ‘misrepresentations of facts alone are sufficient to condemn it.’ Let me reply in the interests of truth and accuracy that the history has not been written as your reviewer intimates by a ‘small clique’ but by a very large number of women in various countries, nurses who have helped to make the history of nursing and can speak from an intimate and full knowledge of the work and events in which they have participated.

“To whom, pray, would you turn for accurate information concerning nursing but to those nurses whose ability and devotion to their calling has led them to study its problems for the purpose of improving it and rendering it more efficient? And so far from being ‘animated by prejudice,’ the attitude of the writers from various countries seems on the whole moderate and unrestrained. Doubtless unpalatable truths are presented. It would be difficult indeed to write any true history of nursing during the past quarter of a century, at least, which would form pleasant reading for those, who, in hospitals or out of them, have been concerned with that enterprise which we can only truthfully call the exploitation of nurses. The historian of the future who will have access to the facts will probably have to present a still less pleasant picture. In

questioning the veracity of the various authors, your reviewer should be specific in his statements, and thus enable the authors to reply to him.

"As my name appears in the review, the opportunity is given, which I gladly use, to state that I believe Volume III and IV are history in a much truer sense than the first two volumes, since in the latter access has been had to first-hand sources. And in this connection let me add that my share in the production of these first volumes is entirely insignificant compared with that contributed by Miss Dock. The history would never have appeared at all had it not been for the generous and liberal way in which Miss Dock took hold of the plan and worked it out, devoting her full time for nearly two years to the task, and bringing to it a great amount of careful research and study, and that freshness, spontaneity, and originality which has characterized all of her writings. There is no literary value in the book except that which has been contributed by Miss Dock.

"Let me further say that I would have highly valued the honor of being associated with Miss Dock in the production of the last two volumes. The idea of these volumes is entirely hers, the work in securing, arranging, and editing the material is hers, that of preparing it for publication is all hers, and the proceeds which come from these books she has, with characteristic generosity, presented to the International Council of Nurses. To many of us the only real defect of the last volumes is the omission of any reference whatever to the large, important, and uniquely valuable share which Miss Dock has had in the development of nursing in this country. It is doubtful to my mind if any one of our number has rendered greater service than she has rendered and for the benefit of future generations of nurses this lack in the history should in some way be supplied.

"I shall be indebted to you if you will kindly publish this in an early issue of your journal and would say that I am also sending a copy to the 'British Journal of Nursing.'

"Believe me,

"Faithfully yours,

"(Signed) ADELAIDE NUTTING."

#### PROGRESS OF STATE REGISTRATION

THE California bill has been signed by the governor and is considered by those most deeply concerned to be a most satisfactory measure. Registration is placed under the supervision of the Board of Health.

The new Illinois bill has passed both houses, and as we go to press we have not heard whether or not it has been signed by the governor. We shall hope to give the text of both of these bills in our next issue.

#### A CORRECTION

WE hope only a few of our readers noticed the mistake on the announcement page of the June JOURNAL by which the name of the president of a state association was substituted for that of the president of the JOURNAL directors. Some one, forgetting that every word in the JOURNAL has to be submitted to the editors at Rochester, sent at the eleventh hour, to the Philadelphia office, a change of address for the official department. This fell into the hands of an employee not familiar with the routine, who evidently thought there could be but one president, and that person, of course, the JOURNAL president, and behold the astonishing result!

With the growth of the JOURNAL the amount of detail in making up and printing a number has become quite tremendous. Dozens of nurses contribute the items, and from the beginning of the process to the end several hundred people have a hand in it. To issue what is really a monthly newspaper requires accuracy, promptness, an established routine, and that each person shall be familiar with the peculiar demands of the JOURNAL. While such errors as this are trying to the soul of those responsible for the work, they will sometimes occur.